

Rules of the Game

All About Trip Attacks (Part Two)

By Skip Williams



[Last installment](#), we considered the basics of tripping other creatures. This week we'll consider a few related topics.

Size Modifiers for Trip Attacks

As noted in Part One, you receive a bonus on opposed checks to resolve trip attacks if your **size** is bigger than **Medium**. You get a penalty on opposed checks to resolve trip attacks if your size is smaller than Medium. Your **size modifier** applies whether you're the attacker or the defender, and the size modifier for trip attempts is the same as the modifier for **grappling**. Table 7-1 in the *Monster Manual* shows the modifiers, but I've included them here for convenience.

Size Category	Grapple/Trip Modifier
Fine	-16
Diminutive	-12
Tiny	-8
Small	-4
Medium	+0
Large	+4
Huge	+8
Gargantuan	+12
Colossal	+16

Kinds of Trip Attacks

The trip attack covers almost any situation in which one combatant tries to make another fall down, from sticking out a foot to cause a character to stumble to yanking a rider out of the saddle.

Who Can Be Tripped: Any creature that is subject to gravity and somehow holds itself off the ground is subject to trip attacks. **Incorporeal** creatures can't be tripped -- even by other incorporeal creatures -- because they can't fall down. A **prone** creature has already fallen down and can't be tripped. (This can prove significant when you've tripped a foe and wish to keep him down; see the section on being tripped [below].) Limbless creatures pretty much just lie on the ground (at least while using their normal land speeds or just standing around on a fairly level space) and usually can't be tripped unless they're climbing or in some other precarious situation. This includes creatures with the **ooze type**, snakes, and anything else that wiggles and slithers. The rules don't give any guidance on creatures whose body types make them immune to trip attacks, so you'll have to rely on your common sense here.

Tripping Climbers: When you make a trip attack against a creature using the Climb skill or using a climb speed, you literally dislodge the climber from the surface she is ascending (or descending). You resolve the trip attack just as you would any other trip attack, except that if you succeed the climber falls. The climber, however, can make a Climb check to catch himself as noted in the Climb skill description. If the climber doesn't catch herself, she falls to the bottom of the slope or wall she was climbing and takes the appropriate amount of damage. The climber is prone after falling.

Tripping Flyers: A creature flying with wings can be tripped. If the attempt succeeds, the creature stalls and falls 150 feet. [See Rules of the Game: All About Movement](#) for details (and a few unofficial additional rules about

tripping flying creatures).

Creatures that fly without wings (and any creature with perfect maneuverability) can't be tripped while flying. If the creature is still in the air after stalling, it must succeed on a **DC 20 Reflex save** to recover and resume flying. Otherwise it falls another 300 feet. If it hits the ground, it lands prone and takes falling damage.

Tripping Swimmers: Since water tends to hold creatures up, you can't trip a swimmer.

Tripping Riders: You can pull a rider out of his seat with a trip attack. If you win the opposed check, the rider falls off his mount and takes 1d6 points of damage if the mount is moving or standing on the ground. If you make someone fall off a flying mount, she could take considerably more damage, depending on the mount's altitude.

The rider on a mount that isn't flying can attempt a Ride check (DC 15) to soften the fall and take no damage. The rider lands on his feet if he successfully softens his fall. If he takes damage, he falls prone.

Weapons in Trip Attacks

Using a weapon to trip a foe is a great idea. You avoid the **attack of opportunity** you provoke if you tried to trip the foe using your hand. If you trip with a reach weapon, you can trip at a distance -- albeit a fairly short one. Finally, if you lose the required opposed check and become subject to a trip attempt from your foe, you can avoid the attempt by dropping the weapon (a free action). If you drop the weapon, you must decide to do so before you and your foe make opposed checks to resolve the reactive trip attempt.

You can't trip with just any weapon. The weapon has to be flexible enough to wrap around the foe (or part of the foe) or it must have some sort of a hook or projection at the business end that can snag a foe. It would be helpful if Table 7-5 in the *Player's Handbook* indicated which weapons are useful for trip attacks, but it doesn't. The rules for trip attacks on page 159, however, include a list of weapons that can be used in trip attacks. The detailed weapon descriptions on pages 114-122 in the *Player's Handbook* also mention if particular weapons are useful for trip attacks. The weapons from the *Player's Handbook* you can use to trip foes are spiked chain, dire flail, heavy flail, light flail, guisarme, halberd, and whip. The spiked chain, guisarme, halberd, and whip have reach. The spiked chain and whip can be used against foes adjacent to you.

When considering weapons introduced in other books, check the text description included with the weapon. If the weapon can trip a foe, the text describing the weapon will say so.

Being Tripped



As noted in Part One, you fall prone when a foe successfully trips you. Also as noted in Part One, when you're prone, you cannot make **ranged attacks** with weapons (except for crossbows) and you suffer a -4 **penalty** on **melee attacks**. If you're attacked while prone, you gain a +4 **bonus** to **Armor Class** against ranged attacks but take a -4 penalty to Armor Class against melee attacks.

Standing up from being prone is a move action that provokes an attack of opportunity. You can crawl 5 feet as a move action without getting up, but doing so provokes attacks of opportunity. See [Rules of the Game: All About Movement](#) for details.

It's possible to attempt a trip attack as an attack of opportunity. Fortunately, you can't be tripped while getting up from prone, at least not through the attack of opportunity you provoke. That's because attacks of opportunity are resolved before the actions that provoke them (there are a few exceptions, see [Rules of the Game: All About Attacks of Opportunity](#) for details). When you try to stand up from a prone position, the attack of opportunity comes before you get back on your feet. Since you're still prone when the attack comes, the attack of opportunity can't trip you.

Your foes still can use trip attacks to keep you down when you're prone, however. A foe can use the ready action to prepare a trip attack against you when you stand up.

Some people think you don't threaten the area around you after you've been tripped (or any time you're prone). That's not true, however. You have some penalties (as noted earlier), but you still can make melee attacks into the squares around you.

In Conclusion

That wraps up our discussion of tripping. To read more about using this tactic in your **D&D** game, remember to take a look at a [Tactics and Tips column that deals with tripping](#).

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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